

September 17, 2003

**BURKE CENTRE VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS (VRE) STATION  
PARKING GARAGE TASK FORCE MEETING**

**Meeting One – Review, Orientation, Work Plan**

**AGENDA**

- **Welcome and Introductions – Supervisor Sharon Bulova**
  - **Brief Review of Efforts to Expand Parking**

<b>Time Frame and Funding</b>	<b>Dan Southworth</b>
<b>Short Term &amp; Interim Solutions (Increase Surface Parking)</b>	<b>Mike Lake</b>
<b>Subscription Bus Service</b>	<b>Leonard Wolfenstein</b>
<b>Long Term Solutions (Structured Parking)</b>	<b>Jim Cole, Larry Ichter</b>
<b>Why This Site?</b>	<b>Jim Cole, Larry Ichter</b>
<b>Why Option “C”?</b>	<b>Jim Cole, Larry Ichter</b>

- **Task Force Mission Statement – Supervisor Sharon Bulova**
- **Task Force Discussion and Questions - Supervisor Sharon Bulova**
- **Time Line/Meeting Schedule - Supervisor Sharon Bulova**
- **Homework Assignment - Supervisor Sharon Bulova**

**Adjourn**

# BURKE CENTRE VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS PARKING FACILITY EXPANSION TASK FORCE

## MEETING ONE SUMMARY

The first meeting of the Burke Centre Virginia Railway Express Parking Facility Expansion Task Force was held in Braddock Hall at the Braddock District Supervisor's office on September 17. Supervisor Bulova welcomed all those in attendance and asked everyone to introduce themselves and explain their interest in the project.

Supervisor Bulova then gave a brief overview of what had been previously determined. Over the past year, county staff had been evaluating options and constraints at the Burke Centre site and surrounding areas, and at a meeting on May 6, 2003, presented their work to community residents. Those in attendance at the May 6 meeting preferred concept "C," which is also the staff preferred alternative. Supervisor Bulova explained that the structure will take three to four years to complete, and county staff has been working on some short and medium term solutions. Supervisor Bulova then asked the county staff present to review the efforts taken thus far to expand parking at the Burke Centre station.

First to speak was Dan Southworth of the Fairfax County Department of Transportation about the **time frame for the project and sources of funding**. In October 2003, the bid process for design firms will start, and the design firm should be procured in six months. During this time, the county will have to file the necessary environmental documents and get federal approval for the project. In spring 2004, the project will enter the formal design phase which should last about 18 months. During that time, staff will evaluate the various configurations of the concept C structure, address issues of pedestrian access, and determine whether the project meets the requirements for the "2232 process." Southworth stated that the construction phase would follow beginning in about October 2005. The first six months would consist of a bid process, and construction would begin in the spring of 2006. Southworth estimates that construction would take about 18 months with a tentative completion date of October 2007.

Southworth also spoke about funding for the project. He explained that more funding will be acquired as the project progresses. Right now, Fairfax County has \$5 million from the federal government and is in the process of getting another \$2 million through the Federal Highway Administration's Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program. The county has also asked for an additional \$9 million for FY 2005, and a decision on that grant will be made in the next few months.

Next to speak was Mike Lake, a Senior Transportation Planner also with the Department of Transportation. Lake described the incremental addition of **surface parking spaces** over the years (e.g. 140 spaces were added in 1996). He said that the county was planning to add 20 new spaces in the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) right-of-way by spring 2004 and an additional 62 spaces by fall 2004. Lake also mentioned the county's efforts to find and lease off-site parking have failed since Target, Bowl America, and the local shopping centers have all rejected all of the county's proposals, expressing concern about their own parking needs, especially during the holiday season. Fairfax Connector service has also been attempted, Lake explained, but due to low ridership levels, the service had to be cancelled.

Leonard Wolfenstein, Chief of the Planning Section of the Department of Transportation, spoke about the **subscription bus service** being developed to alleviate overcrowding at the Burke Centre station. Fairfax County was awarded an \$800,000 grant from Governor Warner's Congestion Mitigation Fund to pay for the development of a customized bus service during the morning and evening rush. A license plate survey has been conducted to determine what routes would best serve current riders who drive to the station. Based on the data from that survey, the Department of Transportation identified two primary routes – one running south of Burke Centre Parkway, and one running north of the Burke Centre station. Bus routes will be limited to 15 minute

loops to give the buses enough time to meet each train. Riders will sign up for a specific time to catch the bus every day offering regular and personal service. The bus service will be free, and frequent riders will be able to get discounts on purchases of 10-ride or monthly tickets for the VRE. The bus service will operate with 16 passenger buses; signs signaling bus stops will not be erected; Wolfenstein described this service as running on the “school bus” model. This service will be operated by Fairfax Connector, and Wolfenstein said he hopes to have it running by December 1, 2003. At present, Fairfax County has enough funding to keep the buses running for a year. If the project is successful, the county will seek more funding at that time to keep the buses running.

Supervisor Bulova then introduced Jim Cole, the Project Engineer for the initial study with the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services. Cole explained that, in August 2002, a contract was awarded to look at the **options available for parking expansion at the Burke Centre and Rolling Road VRE stations**. Factors under consideration included traffic, zoning, the environment, pedestrian/bicycle access, and the existing parking facility. Currently, the Burke Centre parking lot sits on 7.4 acres with a total of 540 spaces. The county estimates that an additional 280-460 spaces will be needed by 2010, and another 780 to 1060 spaces by 2020.

Cole explained that the land across the tracks from the station where the old farmhouse was located next to Target was not an option for parking expansion. VDOT signed an easement in perpetuity with the Army Corps of Engineers to provide wetlands mitigation to replace wetlands disturbed during the construction of the Roberts Road overpass. The Army Corps of Engineers requires a 2:1 replacement ratio when wetlands are disturbed during construction, Cole said, and this land has already been designated for that purpose. If this land were to be used to build a parking facility, then another tract of land in the area would have to be identified, purchased, and turned into wetlands; given development in this area of the county, that task is nearly impossible.

Cole reviewed the **concepts presented at the May 6 meeting**. A variety of factors came to play in the different concepts, including the environmentally sensitive areas next to Sideburn Branch, the Burke Centre baseball field, and distance from the bus drop-off and kiss and ride to the station. The overwhelming favorite design at the May 6 meeting was concept “C” because it left the baseball field intact and did not disturb any of the environmentally sensitive areas. This proposed plan is a three bay, five story structure that would be approximately 500 feet long by 186 feet wide. The plan also includes a stair tower next to the station, vehicular access to the baseball field (particularly for emergency vehicles), and extensive lighting. The height of the structure would be about equal to that of Target though the structure will be at a slightly lower elevation, according to Cole. **A final report should be done by the end of the year when the formal design process will begin.**

Supervisor Bulova then asked Carey Needham of the Building Design Branch of the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services to speak about the next step in the design phase, the **“2232 process.”** Basically, that review is mandated by state law in lieu of a zoning change and is held before the Planning Commission. It will determine whether the new structure will be compatible with the *character, extent, and location* of the area. That whole process, Needham said, will last about three to four months.

Following the presentations by county staff about bringing everyone up to speed with the efforts to date, Supervisor Bulova asked everyone to read and comment on the **mission statement** passed out at the beginning of the meeting. Supervisor Bulova mentioned creating subcommittees to address specific issues, such as pedestrian access. One person wanted to add the word “facility” to make the title of the task force read “Burke Centre Virginia Railway Express Parking Facility Expansion Task Force.” Also, a few people suggested adding a provision for “multi-modal accessibility” to the second paragraph, and the audience agreed to these changes. Supervisor Bulova said she would revise the mission statement and bring it to the next meeting for a formal vote on its acceptance. Also, the times and dates of the meetings were chosen – **7:15-9:00 PM on the third Wednesday of each month through February 2004**. The possibility of more meetings was left for future discussion.

Supervisor Bulova then invited **Mary Cortina, chairwoman of Burke Centre VRE Task Force**, to present her committee's concerns with the concepts being discussed. Cortina said that her committee is made up of avid VRE riders, and their main concerns with the project are about concept "C." They prefer that the structure be built on the site designated to become the wetland mitigation area per the rules of the Army Corps of Engineers. This site, Cortina explained, would offer the following benefits:

- Increased convenience for riders on the north side of the railroad tracks;
- A more appropriate use of land between Target and the Dominion Virginia Power substation;
- Alleviate the traffic bottleneck at Premier Court;
- Would not isolate the baseball field; and
- Increased parking by leaving the existing lot intact.

Cortina proposed a walkway over the tracks to allow for access from this proposed garage to the station. She stated that Burke Centre also had a number of concerns about **crime** and the **environmental sensitivity** of Sideburn Branch. Burke Center residents, she said, are not happy about the appearance of Target, so want an **aesthetically pleasing structure that incorporates "green" building techniques**. Cortina and the other Burke Centre Task Force members asked if they could review the future ridership projection data and the reports of earlier task forces that investigated building another station west of Burke Centre.

Mike Lake addressed the issue of the **"western" station**. He explained that that idea had been explored many times, but no location has ever worked out on either side of the tracks between Burke Centre and the Prince William County line where a station could be built. A task force led by Planning Commissioner Pete Murphy had concluded that the idea of building a station west of Burke Centre was just not feasible under *any* circumstances in the near future.

Another member of Burke Centre's task force pointed out that parking problems at the station during construction would be reduced if the garage were built on the other side of the tracks. In response, Mike McMahon of Colony Park stated that residents on the north side of the tracks had concerns about building the garage when his neighborhood has already experienced an impact from Target.

*[Mike McMahon has requested the following comments be added to the summary:*

What I said is that we don't have a problem with a new station if it is constructed in the exact location of the existing parking lot. However, we do have major concerns with the request to locate the garage structure on the North side of the tracks in the area where the newly developed wetlands exist. This suggestion is not acceptable to the Board of Directors and residents of Woodlyn and Colony Park who have been heavily impacted by the development of the Target department store. The building of a 5 story garage across from our communities would have a negative impact to both communities, worsen traffic in that area and put the entire burden of the structure on our communities. Furthermore, the bridge was built to eliminate at grade crossing at the train tracks and to better serve the VRE station. New traffic lights were added at the entrance to the parking lot and it is much easier to safely enter and exit the station due to bridge construction and Roberts Road improvements.]

In response, Art Steffen asked how many people use the station that come from areas outside the Braddock District. Another gentleman stated that most users, according to what he had said, come from within a three mile radius. Representatives from Burke Centre disagreed, saying that people come a long way up Route 123 to use this station intended for the community.

Supervisor Bulova interjected that everyone in the room is there because they support VRE in some respect and that most riders at the Burke Centre station are from the community. Even if people do use the station from more distant communities, that's one less car on the road cutting through Braddock District neighborhoods. She said that, if we want service to grow, we need to increase the parking available since all stations are near capacity.

One lady said she would walk to the station since it is only one mile from her house, but because there is no bridge across Sideburn Branch, she has to drive. One gentleman stated that, if we build more spaces, we'll have to build a bigger platform, so why not just build a new station behind the Fairfax Station Shopping Center. Mike Lake said that he would provide a copy of Pete Murphy's task force report that says why that plan is not an option, but all indicated that the **platform could and would be extended in the future**. Another Burke Centre representative mentioned concerns about adding 1000 cars to the Premier Court entrance, suggesting that the problem would be solved if the garage were on the other side of the tracks or a complete redesign of the whole area.

A gentleman asked what guarantee the community had that VRE would be operating in five or ten years. If VRE folded, the garage would be useless. Supervisor Bulova commented that VRE has a good working relationship with the federal government, which subsidizes VRE. Additionally, if Amtrak folded, VRE could still operate using another operating partner. Jennifer Straub, Director of VRE's Capital Programs, said that VRE currently carries about 14,000 people a day. In other words, she said, too many people rely on VRE for it to shut down. Additionally, VRE enjoys support from high levels of the federal government and Congress.

One person then commented that a walkway over the tracks has to accommodate bikes, bike lockers and wheelchairs, which would make the structure quite large. Another person suggested putting the walkway underground, however because the water table is so high, generators would have to be built to pump out constantly any water making the project too expensive.

Supervisor Bulova then began to summarize what had been discussed and assign homework to all task force participants. First, at the request of the Burke Centre Task Force, Supervisor Bulova instructed **Jim Cole to get a written response from the Army Corps of Engineers regarding the possibility of building the structure on the land designated for wetland mitigation**. Supervisor Bulova then instructed **county staff to locate copies of the Western Fairfax study conducted by Pete Murphy's task force to explain why a station cannot be built anywhere west of Burke Centre**. Next, Supervisor Bulova asked **Jennifer Straub to bring VRE's data on current and future ridership**. Janyce Hedetniemi suggested creating **a "minilibrary" at Supervisor Bulova's office** so all participants could peruse the data at their leisure. Supervisor Bulova agreed and said that after the next meeting, all materials could be checked out from her office.

**Homework was then assigned to all those participating in the task force**. Supervisor Bulova asked everyone to go out and **bring pictures of parking garage designs that they found attractive and would like to implement at the Burke Centre station**. Examples given included the George Mason University parking garage at the Johnson Center and the National Airport parking garage. The meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM. **The next meeting is scheduled for October 15, 2003 at 7:15 PM.**

After the meeting, Mike Brennan volunteered to chair a subcommittee on pedestrian access, Steve Schrobo said he would lead a subcommittee on operations, and Janyce Hedetniemi offered to head a subcommittee on design.

Attendees:

Braddock District Office:  
Supervisor Sharon Bulova  
Florence Naeve  
Robert Glass

Dan Southworth, Department of Transportation  
Mike Lake, Department of Transportation  
Leonard Wolfenstein, Department of Transportation  
Jim Cole, Department of Public Works  
Ken Lim, Department of Public Works  
Carey Needham, Department of Public Works  
Karyn Moreland, Department of Transportation  
Jennifer Straub, Virginia Railway Express

Ms. Caryna Baker-Fox  
Ms. Esther Beck  
Mr. Michael Brennan  
Mr. Steve Brown  
Ms. Mary Cortina  
Mr. Sam DiBartolo  
Ms. Shirley DiBartolo  
Mr. Marc Flaster  
Mr. Ray Foreman  
Ms. Gail Hamilton  
Ms. Janyce Hedetniemi  
Ms. Debra Holland  
Ms. Kate Mattice  
Mr. Mike McMahon  
Mr. Jeff Nolan  
Mr. John Provost  
Mr. Christopher Rodee  
Mr. Leon Rose  
Mr. Steve Schrobo  
Mr. Tom Schwarz  
Mr. Art Steffen